

## ***C.A. Thayer* Stop**

### **# 13 The Restoration of the *C.A. Thayer***

You're listening to "Maritime Voices" from San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park. I'm Ranger Mark Neuweld. In this episode, we'll consider the preservation of the schooner *C.A. Thayer*.

By 1995, after a century afloat, the *C.A. Thayer* had lost her curve. The same design that helped her survive the dangerous Pacific Coast eventually almost ripped her apart. A master shipbuilder, Hans Bendixsen built the *Thayer* in California for sailing on the West Coast. He carefully crafted her hull to be not only shallow enough to clear the hazardous sand bars of the West Coast, but also wide enough to remain stable in wild Pacific storms. However, her bow and stern were relatively narrow to provide for reasonable speed and handling. As the Douglas-fir from which she was built became rotten with age, her narrow, less buoyant bow and stern began to sag. The sagging became severe, and like an old warrior with brittle bones, her spine began to crack.

Just as her life was coming to an end, the *C.A. Thayer* was reborn. After a major restoration, she returned home to San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park in 2007. The scale of this renovation was unprecedented in the history of modern maritime preservation. *Thayer* was stripped to the core, revealing the shipbuilding secrets of Hans Bendixsen. With this new knowledge, our appreciation grew for the minds and hands of those who crafted her. Much more than a schooner has been saved. Park superintendent Kate Richardson said, "This project has been a labor of love for all of us who were privileged to be involved. On a practical level, we have preserved a vital piece of American history and culture. On an emotional level, we have breathed life back into the hopes and dreams of the men and women who lived on, for, and by the sea. *Thayer* is a legacy of opportunity and independence that I am proud to pass along to future generations." Indeed, the very mission of the National Park Service includes preserving such gifts from the past.

Today, if you were to walk forward from the captain's cabin to the bow of the *C.A. Thayer*, you would notice that you are walking up an incline. Structurally sound once again, she has regained her curve and is ready for another century of service.